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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 USNATO 000687

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SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 7 HLTF AND NRC-ACE MEETINGS AT NATO

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED SUBJECT TAGS)

REF: STATE 182992

Classified By: Political Advisor Stuart Seldowitz, Reasons 1.4(d)

**¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY:** The HLTF met November 7 to review next steps regarding the U.S.-proposed "positive agenda" for engaging Russia on CFE issues during the next months; to consider language on CFE for inclusion in a Riga communiqu; and to address remaining questions regarding several I.S. discussion papers, including Germany's proposed "matrix" setting out the status of the Istanbul commitments. An NRC (ACE) meeting followed the HLTF. Highlights:

-- The HLTF referred the Istanbul "Matrix" and Consolidated IS Paper on stationed forces to Deputies for further work/finalization.

-- Allies agreed to utilize the message of the Positive Agenda paper in exchanges with Russia, including the NRC (ACE), but recognized that it needed additional discussion by Deputies to resolve questions that resulted from the merging of extensive Franco-German comments into the U.S. food-for-thought paper.

-- Concerning the Russian CSBM proposals, the HLTF recognized the need for instruction to delegations in Vienna, but there was no consensus to forward the I.S. and IMS papers as guidance. Based on comments by the French representative, which represented the minimum that might be agreeable, the I.S. was tasked to prepare a text which would be circulated under silence procedure.

-- Several Allies expressed concern that the draft communique text circulated by the I.S. lacked key messages, such as a call upon the Russian Federation to resume the withdrawal of forces from Moldova. It was agreed that Deputies should develop a text keying off of the last two NAC communiqes, suitably updated. Deputies would work communique language as their first priority. The next HLTF meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2007.

-- At the 7 November NRC (ACE) session, Allies sent a strong, unified message that effectively captured ideas for promoting reciprocal dialogue in the NRC on CFE and conventional forces issues, as suggested in the U.S. "positive agenda" paper. The Russian representative welcomed this "revolutionary" message and promised to report it favorably to Moscow. END SUMMARY.

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Contacts and Bilaterals  
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¶2. (SBU) The Chairman, Assistant SECGEN for Policy Martin Erdmann, thoroughly discussed the NATO SECGEN's recent trip to Moscow, where he met with Russian President Putin, Foreign Minister Antonov, and Minister of Defense Ivanov. A classified report is available (SG(2006)0777, dated November 2, 2006). Among the issues addressed were:

-- Georgia military actions which Putin said could lead to military confrontation;

-- Russian concerns about U.S. plans to use facilities in Romania and Bulgaria; and

-- Moscow's insistence that Russian withdrawal of military forces in Moldovan Transnistrian region was dependent on a political settlement.

¶3. (SBU) Norway also reported on discussions with Defense Minister Ivanov in which he emphasized three points: 1) NATO enlargement; 2) the establishment of new bases in Romania and Bulgaria; and 3) the need for a political solution between Moldova and Transnistria as the precondition for Russian troop withdrawal from Moldova.

¶4. (SBU) The United States HLTF Rep. DAS Karin L. Look also briefed on A/S DeSutter's discussions with FMA Antonov, and the Russian demarche received by DAS Look from Russia's Senior Political Counselor Yermakov in Washington. Rep. Look noted that the basing issue was not discussed in either meeting with Russia (DeSutter's or Look's). Look reported that Yermakov's focus was the Russian CSBM proposals it had tabled in the forum for Security and Cooperation (FSC) in Vienna. She noted that in advancing the transit proposal, it appeared Russia was trying to "salami slice" the Adapted CFE Treaty. The U.S. was supportive of the substance of transit proposals in the context of the adapted CFE Treaty, but that was a package deal. CFE countries needed to keep their focus achieving EIF of the Adapted CFE Treaty, which is the

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"prize." The U.S. was not prepared to implement the Adapted Treaty piecemeal. Rep. Look also reminded Allies that negotiation leading up to the signature of the adapted CFE Treaty entailed many compromises which resulted in all States Parties being able to sign the "Agreement on Adaptation" in Istanbul on November 19, 1999. Germany, Hungary, and Italy also stated that they were demarshaled by Russia on the Russian CSBM proposals. Germany agreed that the proposals lacked reciprocity. Hungary stated it is continuing to study the proposals and that it would be extremely difficult to agree on these issues this year. Hungary and Italy also claimed that Russia would be interested in briefing on its Rapid Reaction Forces, as a sign of transparency.

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Istanbul Commitments  
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¶5. (C) The Chairman reported on progress made by Deputies on a number of I.S. papers at the October 26 Deputies meeting and noted that there was more work remaining. Erdmann reiterated the point that the Istanbul commitments "Matrix" should be for NATO's internal use only, as a reference. Discussion made clear that the big issue outstanding is the status of the Russian PKF in Moldova with respect to the Istanbul commitments. Germany opined that the Russian PKF in Moldova was not covered by the Istanbul commitments; suggesting that this is demonstrated by the fact that the PKF is separately addressed in the OSCE Istanbul declaration. Others/many felt differently. U.S. Rep. Look emphasized three points regarding the paper: that the "Matrix" should be factual, not interpretive; that it would be useful to have an agreed text for use as a resource document; and that Deputies

should complete the work resolving the remaining differences.

Turkey (Meric) agreed that there were differences amongst Allies which needed to be ironed out and because of that reason, the document should be for internal use only.

Romania and the UK stressed that NATO should consider the PKF to be covered by the Istanbul commitments. Biontino reiterated the familiar German argument that the 1992 cease fire agreement constitutes host-nation consent, and would need to be abrogated to revoke that consent. No Ally spoke to endorse this position.

¶ 6. (C) Nonpapers were provided by Moldova and Georgia to inform HLTF discussion. The Moldovan paper stressed Chisinau's desire to have Russian forces withdrawn from Moldova; that an international PKO should replace the Russian peacekeeping force; that long-term monitoring of ammo sites in Transnistria should be established; that the 5 2 format for working a settlement should continue; and thanked the Alliance for its unwavering support. The paper did not state clearly that Moldova considered the PKF to be covered by the Istanbul commitments, as previous Moldovan statements have done. This fuelled German argumentation.

¶ 7. (C) The Georgian paper was relatively upbeat, describing recent tensions between Moscow and Tbilisi but noting that Russia was continuing to implement withdrawal commitments concerning Akhalkalaki and Batumi. It also discussed at some length steps that would need to be taken for Gudauta to be considered "disbanded and withdrawn," focusing on the model of what had taken place at Vaziani years earlier. Germany noted that it continues to believe a "fact-finding" mission to Gudauta was essential, but was not having much success in orchestrating the mission.

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Consolidation of I.S. Papers  
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¶ 8. (SBU) The Chairman acknowledged that the Deputies had almost come to consensus on the paper, and the two sentences outstanding should be easily resolved. Belgium questioned the status of the document once completed. The disposition of this paper will be on the 18 January HLTF agenda. UK, U.S., and France all preferred that the document remain an internal use paper. Turkey noted that a title change should be made. Germany and Norway remarked that it should be the basis for a response to Russia as NATO expands.

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Positive Agenda  
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¶ 9. (C) France opened discussion by pointing out that the new I.S. text, which merged the original U.S. paper and Franco-German comments, would need considerable work by Deputies. The U.S. agreed but responded that the Alliance should not lose the opportunity of today's NRC-ACE to reflect the "good story" of NATO's contributions to

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Euro-Atlantic security, which needs to be shared with the public. Others agreed. The UK thanked Deputies for their efforts and noted that the HLTF should take a serious look at public diplomacy after Riga. Turkey felt it was important to have a positive agenda for the ACE. The Czech Republic, supported by Romania, cautioned others that several aspects of the merged "positive agenda" paper had not been agreed in the Deputies' discussion, citing in particular Franco-German suggestions regarding inspections and fact-finding missions on the territories of Moldova and Georgia. This area needed further work to avoid any suggestion of political recognition of separatist regimes, in light of the relationship between these ideas and ongoing settlement discussions.

¶10. (C) Allies agreed to place the original Franco-German paper on CFE's contributions to Euro-Atlantic Security under silence in order to permit it to be placed on the NATO website. Deputies would return to the positive agenda paper, to sort out remaining differences. While the Germans hoped to see this document agreed before Riga, this ambitious notion had no support. Other Allies argued that Deputies' priority must be the NAC communique text on CFE/Istanbul.

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Russian CSBM Proposals  
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¶11. (C) The U.S. opened discussion by stating that the U.S. is cool to the Russian proposals; we do not want to go down the path of applying elements of the Adapted Treaty piecemeal, which appears to be what the Russians are proposing. U.S. Rep Look argued that guidance is needed for Vienna delegations and that she was prepared to support sending the I.S. paper and the IMS paper to Vienna in that capacity. France and Germany argued that the I.S. paper was too negative, and that NATO needed to take a positive tone in engaging the Russians in Vienna. Several Allies agreed that it was important not to send too negative a signal.

¶12. (C) Look argued that there was a risk of misleading Russia: she believed there was consensus among Allies not to salami-slice the Adapted CFE Treaty, and in fact these proposals would never be acceptable. Allies might usefully pursue dialogue with Russia on the concerns that underpin their proposals, but the proposals themselves would not succeed. Several Allies appeared to acknowledge this, but the Franco-German view on the merits of a positive tone, at least prior to the OSCE Ministerial, had widespread support. In an effort to bridge the gap, the French rep proposed minimalist guidance which would underscore Allies' concern about the proposals, the need to study them carefully, our openness to dialogue, and our conviction that these proposals would not be agreed for the OSCE Ministerial. The I.S. agreed to develop a text and place it under silence.

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Preparation for the NRC-ACE  
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¶13. (SBU) Allies and the chair expressed frustration that the Russian delegation had only approved the agenda for the NRC-ACE at 9:00 AM that morning, and that it was still not clear at noon who would sit in the chair for Russia. U.S. Rep Look suggested Allies use the opportunity of the meeting to advance our "positive agenda" on CFE, underscoring the Treaty's value to all States Parties. She noted that the U.S. was willing to comment on CFE-relevant military transformation plans in order to keep the dialogue moving. Germany and other Allies acknowledged this as an important contribution to dialogue. Estonia cautioned that Russia may request to alternate NRC meetings in Brussels with sessions in Vienna, where Russia has a larger arms control staff. The UK said it would not want to reject this out of hand, but all who spoke, including the Chair, agreed that sessions outside Brussels would be a poor use of resources.

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NATO Communique  
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¶14. (C) U.S. Rep Look said that the proposed text, while accurate enough, lacked any sense of urgency regarding completion of Russia's remaining Istanbul commitments. It did not, for example, mention Allies' disappointment with the continued lack of progress in Moldova. France and Germany thought it would be a good idea to add language concerning the CFE RevCon. Romania argued to stick to previous NAC communique text, reinforcing the U.S. message. Turkey weighed in, preferring to use the 2005 Communique text as the basis for work since nothing has changed and the text was sound. The Chairman agreed that Deputies should refine the text accordingly, keeping in mind the need for brevity.

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Date of Next Meeting  
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**¶15.** (SBU) Dates for the four "locked in concrete" meetings could not be "locked-in" due to scheduling procedures by the conference room schedulers at NATO. However, January 18 and April 19 were suggested by the Chairman as two set meeting dates. Germany stated that it could not agree that the HLTF should only meet four times per year. It preferred to meet every other month. The U.S. understood that there may be other meetings scheduled, however it was the desire of the U.S. that four meetings be locked in advance and not changed due to the inability to secure appropriate meeting rooms. This will be discussed further at the January meeting.

**¶16.** (U) The Turkish Rep Meric bid farewell since he will assume his new posting as Ambassador to Singapore in late December or early January.

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NRC-ACE Meeting  
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**¶17.** (C) Chairman Martin Erdmann opened the meeting by referencing the Ministers' tasking to intensify work at the expert level in NRC groups, and then invited comments on the group's standing agenda item: the status of the Istanbul commitments. The U.S. (EUR/RPM Deputy Director Jennifer Laurendeau) took the floor to congratulate Russia for signing into law the 31 March Russian-Georgian withdrawal agreement, and expressed hope for comparable progress in Moldova. She said the U.S. was disappointed by the continued stalemate in Moldova, and noted that resumption of Russian military withdrawal would send a clear message to the Transnistrian leadership that the status quo will not last forever; that the Russian Federation, like other OSCE governments, wants movement on a settlement of the conflict; and that Tiraspol needs to rejoin the political settlement negotiations in a constructive spirit. Germany, Turkey, and Romania seconded the U.S. on the need for progress in Moldova, and reiterated NATO's message that fulfillment of the Istanbul Commitments is necessary to create the basis for Allies to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty.

**¶18.** (C) German Representative Biontino then took up Erdmann's challenge to examine ideas for intensifying work in the group, keying off of the U.S.'s "positive agenda for CFE" paper. Biontino recalled that this was the first NRC-ACE since the Third CFE Review Conference, and that Germany had hoped for a stocktaking discussion, which would not be possible because Russian CFE experts were not present. Biontino commented that the differences between NATO and Russia regarding the utility of the CFE Regime need to be discussed in the NRC. Whereas NATO placed high value on the current and Adapted CFE Treaties, Russian public statements suggested Moscow had a different view. He said the NRC (ACE) should look beyond our focus on the Istanbul Commitments and include dialogue regarding the changes in conventional forces that are taking place in the Russian Federation and in NATO. Drawing from the draft Positive Agenda paper, Germany proposed that the NRC (ACE) consider a number of ideas for future work:

(1) On a reciprocal basis, exchange information on relevant changes in conventional forces;

(2) Discuss security concerns related to European conventional forces (Biontino suggested as an example that Allies lack a clear understanding of Russian concerns that underpin their CSBM proposals, and the NRC (ACE) might be a useful forum for such discussions);

(3) Exchange views on CFE's contribution to Euro-Atlantic Security, particularly in the wake of discussions at the Review Conference;

(4) Consider any remaining obstacles to fulfillment of the Istanbul Commitments (Biontino observed that NATO Allies had provided substantial funds through the OSCE in the past to assist Russian withdrawal from Georgia and Moldova, and funds continue to be available).

(5) Discuss possible fact finding missions in Georgia and Moldova that might help to promote fulfillment of the Istanbul commitments. (Note: There is a Franco-German idea whose specifics have been criticized by the U.S. and other NATO Allies in the HLTF and HLTF Deputies contexts).

¶19. (C) In the tour de table that followed, Romania,

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Turkey, France, Italy, Greece, Belgium, the U.K., and the U.S. all seconded aspects of Biontino's presentation. Turkish rep Meric stressed that Turkey views CFE as the "cornerstone" of European security, and called for a frank, in-depth exchange of views and stocktaking following the 2006 CFE Review Conference to identify a positive way forward. Meric noted that we could exchange information on forces related to CFE, discuss security concerns, and discuss CFE's relevance and contributions to Euro-Atlantic security. France observed that a dialogue could build trust between Russia and NATO and enable us to work together better, and noted that France is willing to exchange information non points of concern, doctrine, or equipment.

¶20. (C) The UK said that while the German proposal was promising, it was important that the group organize itself for thoughtful discussions. He deftly alluded to Allies' dissatisfaction with the fact that, due to Russian stalling, the agenda for the ACE meeting had not been agreed until that morning, and Russian representation had still not been determined until minutes before the meeting. Future meetings required an agenda agreed in advance. Adequate representation was needed to ensure that appropriate experts (i.e., appropriate Russian experts) are prepared to be present at the meeting for focused discussions. There was general support for the idea of agreeing on an agenda in advance, which the Russian representative, a political officer from their NATO Mission, said he would have to confirm with Moscow.

¶21. (C) Laurendeau followed up on the UK proposal, noting that she believed the current agenda had been in place for close to five years. She stressed that the first agenda, which focuses on the Istanbul commitments, needed to remain in place, but that the U.S. agreed that the NRC (ACE) could and should consider broader discussion of issues relevant to CFE that had an important role to play in our assessment of European security more generally. It was appropriate to share information, on a reciprocal basis, regarding plans and intentions, especially plans with CFE implications. Laurendeau observed that because the CFE Treaty exists, there is a structure and a context that requires States Parties to exchange certain types of information on our forces. The U.S., for example, had recently notified the entry into service in the CFE area of several types of equipment associated with our Stryker Brigade Combat Team. She said the U.S. planned to brief the JCG on Stryker equipment types in late November, noting that if the CFE Treaty did not exist, there would be no ready vehicle to ensure nations received such information in a structured way. The U.S. would be prepared to share information in the NRC (ACE) on CFE-relevant developments regarding U.S. forces in Europe. She noted that virtually all NATO Allies, and Russia, are restructuring their conventional forces in order to meet new security challenges. It was important for any discussions in

the NRC (ACE) to be reciprocal.

¶22. (C) COMMENT: Once it became clear that Russia would be represented at the meeting by a political officer rather than an experienced interlocutor on CFE/security issues, Germany and France, seconded by the UK, suggested on the margins that the U.S. postpone planned comments on our Stryker deployment and related issues (reftel). Laurendeau and team agreed that this made sense, and that we would instead preview our briefing to the JCG, and express readiness to offer comments in a subsequent NRC (ACE), while calling (as did other Allies) for broad reciprocity in the dialogue on CFE related restructuring plans. End Comment

¶23. (C) The Russian representative made clear that he was not a CFE expert and could only offer preliminary responses to comments by others. He welcomed the suggestions for broadened dialogue in the NRC(ACE), calling them "revolutionary" even on a date, November 7, which had special meaning in Russian/Soviet history. He believed Moscow would react to our proposals positively, and he would report them in that spirit. He said Moscow had been concerned that the NRC-ACE is being stalemated, but these new ideas were a sign that NATO takes Russian security concerns seriously. The proposed dialogue, he thought, could lead us to enrich the work of the NRC(ACE) into new spheres of common concern. On a less optimistic note, he reminded the group that Russia has a negative view of the current CFE Treaty, and that Russia has already ratified the Adapted CFE, so moving forward on ratification is not the Russian problem. In a departure from the usual Russian patter line, he stressed that Russia was working hard to fulfill its Istanbul Commitments and that they had come a long way on Georgia. They were trying to do the same in Moldova, but they believed that withdrawal was not possible until after a comprehensive political settlement had been achieved -- "which is a different approach than that

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suggested by the U.S."

¶24. (C) The International Staff agreed that it will attempt to circulate a new agenda well in advance of the next meeting, which has not yet been scheduled. After the meeting, the U.S. stressed to the Chair that agenda item 1, discussion of the Istanbul Commitments, must remain on any expanded agenda; the UK endorsed that position and the Chair agreed.

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